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BRAD LITTLE, GOVERNOR
CELIA GOULD, DIRECTOR

November 12, 2019

The Honorable Russ Fulcher
U.S. House of Representatives
1520 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Fulcher,

Please accept this request for your support of the Farm Workforce Modernization Act.

Agriculture is Idaho's strongest industry. It accounts for 18 percent of all sales in our state, more than any other single sector. However, this incomparable industry cannot survive without a stable, capable workforce.

In dairy—Idaho's largest agricultural sector—foreign-born labor accounts for nearly 90 percent of on-farm labor. As you know, the dairy industry does not have a visa system nor can they utilize the current H-2A program. The merits of this bill, however, extend far beyond one sector. You will hear support from across Idaho agriculture—potatoes, grain, cattle, seed, sugarbeets, onions, sheep, hops, alfalfa, mint, nursery, and the litany of allied industries centered around agriculture as well.

It is not exaggeration to say that the difference between Idaho's success or failure in global markets rests on our ability to hire foreign-born labor. Immigration reform can have very real results for our state and could offer much-needed relief to the men and women who put food on our tables.

Today, agricultural producers face almost insurmountable headwinds in every direction. Since 2017, Idaho's number of dairies (based on permit numbers) has **decreased nearly 13 percent**. Markets, weather, trade and labor challenges are driving farmers out of business. In the Pacific Northwest, farm bankruptcies are up **74 percent** from last year. U.S. farm debt is expected to hit record-breaking highs. Your support for this immigration reform bill could have a real impact in mitigating agriculture's severe labor challenges.

Undoubtedly, you will be hearing diverse perspectives about this bill. We urge you to put the greatest stock in the countless producers who are supporting this bill and who ultimately will be the ones to pay for it. Their robust support should have a priority over opposition which may raise improbable concerns or theoretical "what ifs."

The Idaho agriculture community has no illusions that this bill is perfect. In fact, they offer their support with eyes wide open because they recognize this bill is a long-awaited opportunity to make some measurable progress towards a more productive labor environment.

I would be remiss if I did not add that this is a personal matter to me also. I had the privilege of growing up with and then working alongside immigrants my entire life. People from all different countries have been an essential part of my ranch—my way of life. More importantly, they are part of my family, and I hope to see federal

policy that finally begins to account for the enormous contributions foreign-born labor makes to agriculture and beyond.

I sincerely appreciate your service to Idaho agriculture, the state and our nation. Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the need for the Farm Workforce Modernization Act in Idaho agriculture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Celia R. Gould". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Celia Gould
Director

cc: Rick Naerebout, CEO, Idaho Dairymen's Association